

2025-26

**ANNUAL
REPORT**



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Central Alberta Economic Partnership (CAEP) is grounded in the powerful truth that collaboration accelerates progress. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated board members, municipal, industry, and associate members, as well as our regional partners, for their unwavering commitment and leadership. Their efforts are instrumental in driving the success and growth of Central Alberta.

At CAEP, our primary focus has been on strengthening the relationships that are the bedrock of regional success. By bringing together municipalities, industry leaders, and economic development professionals, we are fostering alignment around shared priorities. This collaborative approach not only enables us to respond more effectively to opportunities, but also allows us to address challenges head-on. By doing so, we are positioning Central Alberta as a destination of choice for businesses, investors, and residents alike.

Equally important is how we communicate our story. Central Alberta boasts a strong and diverse economic foundation, a highly skilled workforce, and an exceptional quality of life. However, these strengths must be clearly and consistently communicated to the world. We have taken meaningful steps to better articulate our identity, offerings, and future aspirations. This narrative development is crucial in amplifying our voice and increasing our visibility on the provincial, national, and global stages.

As we look ahead, our focus remains steadfast: deepen collaboration, strengthen investment readiness, and continue telling a confident, unified story about Central Alberta. The momentum we build today will shape the opportunities of tomorrow. By working together and leveraging our collective strengths, we can ensure that Central Alberta continues to thrive and attract new opportunities. Our commitment to collaboration and communication will be key in achieving our goals and securing a prosperous future for the region.

Jean Barclay,
Mayor of Innisfail and CAEP Chair



About CAEP

Central Alberta Economic Partnership (CAEP) is a regional economic development organization whose mission is to strengthen and grow the economy across Central Alberta. Originally created by the Government of Alberta, we are now an independent, not-for-profit organization that brings together communities, industry, and local businesses to align priorities, attract investment, and support economic growth—because we know we’re stronger and more competitive when we work collectively rather than individually.



We are:

- ✓ A catalyst for regional competitiveness, investment readiness and attraction.
- ✓ Industry connectors - improving industry awareness - leading to better opportunities.
- ✓ A Part 9 Corporation with 30+ municipal and industry members representing 300,000 Central Albertans, 175 Elected officials and the region’s 25,000 businesses.
- ✓ Powered by a dedicated Board of Directors and Industry partners.
- ✓ We amplify wins and build relationships—through member engagement, events, project sponsorship and creating a better understanding of economic development, supporting all of our communities.



THE EVOLUTION OF CAEP

1998 >

CAEP is founded when a regional committee approaches the Government of Alberta (GOA) for funding. CAEP is funded as a “Part 9,” not-for-profit organization under the Municipal Government Act.

2004 >

CAEP has 4 GOA staff, offices in the Red Deer Provincial Building and 40 member municipalities. **CAEP’s budget is \$1 million+ per year.**

2016 >

The GOA changes its funding model and no longer provides staff for CAEP operations. CAEP hires its own Executive Director, who becomes CAEP’s only full-time staff person.

2016-2025 >

CAEP’s membership model holds per capita membership fees to minimal year-over-year increases, straining service capacity; the GOA announces it will end CAEP’s funding in March 2027.

TODAY

CAEP is actively redefining its role as a catalyst for economic development in Central Alberta. CAEP is helmed by Paul Salvatore, Executive Director (a full time role) and Marta Bristow, Director of Strategic Initiatives (a 0.25 role).



CAEP'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CAEP is overseen by a dedicated volunteer Board of Directors elected by CAEP members. Board meetings are held regularly throughout the year. Positions are three-year terms, with elections held annually at our Fall General Meeting to fill vacant positions (terms are staggered, to avoid a complete turnover of board members).

CAEP's Board Members are:

Jean Barclay - *Chair*
Town of Innisfail

Barry Kletke - *Vice-Chair*
Town of Trochu

Bob Murray - *Secretary*
Town of Didsbury

Lee Girard - *Treasurer*
Red Deer County

Brenda Knight
Lacombe County

Chad Krahn
City of Red Deer

Jordon Northcott
Clearwater County

Justin Sinclair
Town of Rocky Mountain House

Chief Leonard
Standingontheroad
Montana Nation

Neil Young
Village of Beiseker

Ben Allan (*Associate Member Rep*)
Red Deer Polytechnic

Amy Merrill (*Business Rep*)
Kneehill County

Kevin Stalker (*Business Rep*)
Town of Rocky Mountain House



CAEP STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2027

In February 2025, CAEP created a 2025 - 2027 Strategic Plan. At the heart of the strategy is CAEP's mission:

Empowering Investment Attraction in Central Alberta.

We do this by:

- Providing access to Economic Development expertise
- Creating investor-focused community economic profiles and data
- Delivering projects to advance regional economic development
- Offering strategic training and development activities and timely member communications
- Developing and implementing a government relations strategy
- Building and expanding relationships with regional partners
- Providing networking opportunities through member events

At the 2026 Spring Annual General Meeting, CAEP will unveil a new 3-Year Business Plan. This new plan will build on the work accomplished over the past two years and set a bold new direction for regional economic development in Central Alberta.

A Look Back at 2025 - 2026

KEY PROJECTS AND EVENTS DELIVERED IN 2025 - 2026

SITE LINK FORUM EVENT: SEPTEMBER 3-5, 2025

CAEP hosted the SiteLink Forum Event in Red Deer County on September 3 - 5, 2025. The event was a valuable opportunity to hear from international site selectors and connect with leaders in economic development, construction, architecture, engineering, and real estate to network, gather insights, and share expertise.

Highlights from the event included:

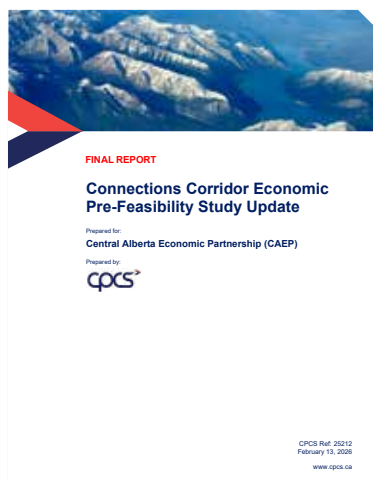
- Presentations and networking with 8 international site selectors, with expert advice on how to position the region for investment opportunities
- Complimentary registrations for CAEP member communities
- Exclusive dinner for CAEP members with the site selectors
- Expert speakers offering insights on regional competitive advantages
- Showcase tour of the CAEP region for the visiting site selectors



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT READINESS PROFILES

CAEP partnered with the Northern and Regional Economic Development (NRED) Program to commission Community Profiles for 10 CAEP member communities. These profiles support economic development efforts, build a common understanding of local economic development and community assets, improve overall investment readiness, and help members respond to investment inquiries.

This project also included a Central Alberta Regional Profile that covers the full CAEP region, now on CAEP's website.



STRATEGIC ADVOCACY: The Connections Corridor Pre-Feasibility Study Update

CAEP and other regional partners commissioned an updated pre-feasibility study for the proposed "Howse Pass Corridor." This corridor is a road that would create a more direct transportation route between BC and central Alberta, running from Highway 1, just north of Golden BC, to Saskatchewan River Crossing in Alberta. This study update was initiated by CAEP's Transportation and Logistics committee, chaired by Ian Oostindie, and was completed in February 2026. The final report will provide the basis for further feasibility studies by regional partners.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TRAINING AND COURSES

CAEP partnered with the Economic Developers of Alberta (EDA) Institute to deliver four economic development courses in 2025 – 2026. CAEP members received free registration to all courses:

Business Retention and Expansion

May 26, 2025, Olds

Establishing the Foundation

March 24, 2026, Red Deer

Performance Measurement in Economic Development

June 27, 2025, Red Deer County

Fundamentals of Rural Economic Development

April 29, 2026, Blackfalds



THE SECRET SAUCE:

Economic Development for Elected Officials Workshop

CAEP developed a 1.5-hour workshop for elected officials to expand their understanding of how their decisions can help shape community growth and make a measurable impact. This session unpacks what actually moves the needle on economic development: aligning council priorities, streamlining permitting, packaging serviced land, and building investor confidence through clear, consistent data. Participants learn the “secret sauce” behind successful local economic growth—and how opportunities can lead to tangible investment with the support of CAEP and our regional partners. This workshop was launched at the 2025 Fall General Meeting and is delivered to CAEP members upon request.

LAUNCH OF TEAM CENTRAL ALBERTA

At the 2025 Fall General Meeting, CAEP launched Team Central Alberta, an exciting new initiative to engage regional businesses and industries in working together to drive growth in key sectors. These include: **transportation and logistics, agri-food and ag-tech, energy, carbon capture and storage, advanced manufacturing, and digital infrastructure.** Team Central Alberta benefits include:

- Accelerated access to decision-makers, regional data, and support from the Team Central Alberta network and municipal leaders.
- Elevated exposure and profile through CAEP event sponsorships and promotional activities.
- Thought leadership opportunities such as speaking engagements and lunch and learn events.
- Invitations to networking events structured to strengthen regional connections.
- A seat at the table for developing regional economic policies that support certainty and success.
- Opportunities to participate in trade missions.

Team Central Alberta will take off more fully in 2026, with numerous projects planned.



What to Expect in 2026 & 2027



One Region, Infinite Opportunities.



**Team
Central
Alberta**

NEW INITIATIVES FOR 2026 - 2027

Here are some of the many projects and initiatives CAEP has planned for 2026-2027.

> Continued expansion of Team Central Alberta

The Executive Director will work with regional partners to build the Team Central Alberta network, including local businesses, large companies, industry associations, post-secondary institutions and innovators—all of whom are committed to investment, job creation and productivity.

> A new Economic Data Portal with clear, consistent and current data for CAEP members

Every CAEP municipal member will have a dedicated community dashboard of key economic data to support economic development efforts, improve overall investment readiness, and help members respond to investment inquiries.

> Regional Land Development and Investment Attraction Strategy for Central Alberta

Phase 1: series of workshops to develop three aspects of the strategy:

- Identifying investment-ready sites
- Opportunities and trends in commercial real estate
- Creating conditions for affordable housing

> Strategic advocacy and international market development

> Economic development workshops and other events

- Continue delivering the Secret Sauce: Economic Development for Elected Officials session
- New EDA workshops; Lunch and Learns with regional industry partners

> CAEP Members-only Website Portal with economic development tools and resources

> Development of a digital marketing plan to enhance CAEP communications through website, newsletter, social media and other channels

> Completion of an MOU with Red Deer Polytechnic

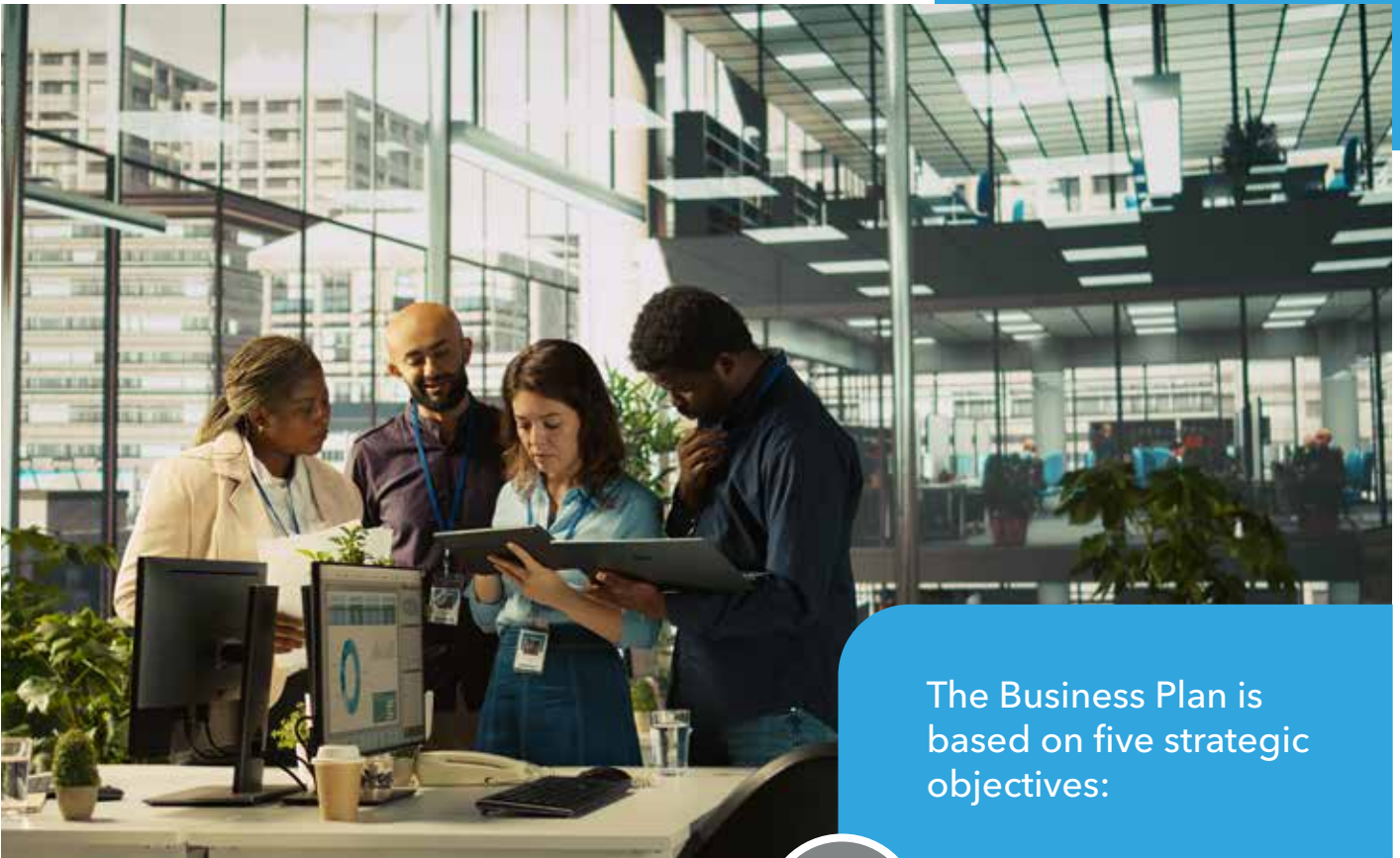
OTHER FOCUS AREAS

> Government Relations

Continue building and strengthening relationships with federal, provincial and municipal governments

> Modernizing CAEP's Articles of Association





The Business Plan is based on five strategic objectives:

2026 – 2028 Business Plan

CAEP is launching a Three-Year Business Plan (2026-2028) at the 2026 Spring Annual General Meeting. This new plan provides a strategic roadmap for CAEP to transition from a government-subsidized body to a self-sustaining, member-valued organization.

Each strategic objective will be delivered through a series of activities, with key performance indicators to track progress.

The Executive Director will deliver a KPI scorecard at each CAEP Spring and Fall General Meeting to demonstrate tangible impacts and outcomes as the plan is implemented.



Establish Legitimacy & Deliver Visible Wins



Build a Regional Intelligence & Data Infrastructure



Activate Team Central Alberta as the Regional Investment Attraction Engine



Build Member Capacity & Strengthen the Regional Economic Development Ecosystem



Achieve Financial Sustainability Through Diversified Revenue & Demonstrated ROI



Empowering Investment Attraction in Central Alberta

Thank you for your support!

CONTACT US

Please reach out to us any time. We'd love to hear from you!

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